

Message Text

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TAGS: PFOR, PK, BG, IN

SUBJECT: BDG VIEWS ON DELHI AGREEMENT

REF: ISLAMABAD 3519; ISLAMABAD 3618

SUMMARY: MFA DIRGEN FOR SUBCONTINENTAL AFFAIRS KAISER MURSHED IS CAUTIOUS ABOUT THE TIMING OF DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH PAKISTAN. WHILE PAKISTAN IS FOCUSING ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, BDG BELIEVES

HUMANITARIAN AND ECONOMIC ISSUES ARE OF PRINCIPAL IMPORTANCE. KAISER ANTICIPATES THAT PROGRESS CAN BE MADE ONLY THROUGH BI-LATERAL TALKS ON NON-BENGALEE REPATRIATION, DIVISION OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES, AND TRADE. MURSHED HAD NO DIRECT COMMENT ON RESOLUTION OF POW ISSUE BUT EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT AGREEMENT HAS BEEN ACCEPTED IN BANGLADESH. WE CONCUR IN HIS ASSESSMENT THAT AGREEMENT HAS ATTRACTED LITTLE PUBLIC CONTROVERSY. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING CALL APRIL 17 BY EMBASSY COUNSELOR, MFA DIRGEN FOR SUBCONTINENTAL AFFAIRS KAISER MURSHED TOOK A MORE CAUTIOUS ATTITUDE THAN AZIZ AHMED (REFTELS) ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND BANGLADESH. STATING

THAT THE BRIEF FOR THE DELHI AGREEMENT HAD BEEN THE VERY NARROW ONE OF RESOLVING THE POW TRIALS IMPASSE, MURSHED SAID MANY COMPLEX ISSUES REMAINED. WHILE THE PAKISTANIS "FOR SOME REASON" WERE FOCUSING ON ESTABLISHING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, BDG VIEWED THE ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS AS OF FIRST IMPORTANCE.

2. BECAUSE THE UNSATISFACTORY ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EAST AND WEST PAKISTAN HAD BEEN THE PRIME REASON FOR THE BENGALEE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE, MURSHED BELIEVES THE DIVISION OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES WILL BE THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM. ON THE HUMANITARIAN SIDE, BDG WISHES TO TRACE BENGALEE OFFICERS "STILL MISSING" IN PAKISTAN AND TO COMPLETE THE REPATRIATION OF NON-BENGALEES. AT DELHI BDG POINTED OUT TO THE PAKISTANIS BY SPECIFIC EXAMPLE THE INCONSISTENCIES OF THEIR CLEARANCE PROCESS FOR NON-BENGALEES AND THE GOP'S MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM FOR BANGLADESH. THE PAKISTANIS THEN ADMITTED, MURSHED SAID, THAT THERE WAS NO VERIFICATION PROCEDURE; APPLICATIONS THAT APPEARED CONVINCING WERE CLEARED. THAT THE GOP AGREED TO REVIEW CASES WAS SOME PROGRESS, IN MURSHED'S VIEW, BUT "WE MUST WAIT AND SEE" IF THE PROBLEM CAN BE SETTLED BY MUTUAL CONSULTATION.

3. WHAT BDG IS GAINING, MURSHED SAID, IS "A PEACE TREATY WITH PAKISTAN BY INSTALLMENTS." ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERATION OF A PRIME-MINISTERIAL MEETING, MURSHED BELIEVES THAT FUTURE PROGRESS WILL DEPEND UPON BILATERAL TALKS ON THE "NUTS AND BOLTS" LEVEL TO WORK OUT COMPLEX ISSUES. REITERATING A STANDARD BDG ATTITUDE THAT BANGLADESH AND MUJIB HAD BEEN MAGNANIMOUS THROUGHOUT THE NEGOTIATIONS, MURSHED SAID THE BDG BELIEVES THE INITIATIVE LIES NOW WITH PAKISTAN.

4. COMMENT: WHILE CONVEYING NO GREAT ENTHUSIASM, MURSHED APPEARED RELIEVED THAT THE DELHI NEGOTIATIONS WERE BEHIND HIM. ALTHOUGH STILL CRITICAL OF GOP FOR DILATORY TACTICS, MURSHED DISPLAYED NONE OF THE BITTERNESS TOWARD PAKISTAN THAT HAS CREPT INTO HIS PAST DISCUSSIONS WITH US. HE APPEARS UNIMPRESSED WITH THE ACCOLADES AZIZ AHMED HAS BEEN BESTOWING UPON BDG FOR ITS GENEROSITY. IN DELHI, IN FACT, HE USED THE OCCASION OF AZIZ'S PUBLIC PRAISE OF THE APRIL 1973 INDO-BD PROPOSAL TO ASK THE PAKISTANIS WHY THEN HAD GOP NOT ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL IMMEDIATELY. MURSHED SHIED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AWAY FROM ANY SPECIFIC DISCUSSION OF THE POW RESOLUTION OR THE REFERENCE IN THE AGREEMENT TO PAKISTANI REGRET OVER ANY POSSIBLE CRIMES. AS FOR REACTION IN BANGLADESH, MURSHED CONSIDERS IT LOW KEY AND DIFFUSE. PERHAPS, HE SAID, "PEOPLE HAVE OTHER THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT."

5. WE AGREE THAT REACTION HERE TO DELHI AGREEMENT HAS BEEN MUTED. LOCAL PRESS PLAYED STORY IN TERMS OF PAKISTANI APOLOGY, BHUTTO'S

APPEAL FOR FORGIVENESS, AND BDG'S GRANTING OF CLEMENCY. BDG OFFICIALS HAVE HAD NO PUBLIC COMMENT SINCE. THE JSD OPPOSITION PARTY HAS ATTACKED THE ABANDONMENT OF THE TRIALS AS BDG'S USURPATION OF A DECISION RIGHTFULLY BELONGING TO THE 75 MILLION BENGALLEES WHO SUFFERED. BUT THIS AND OTHER OPPOSITION PRESS COMMENTS HAVE AROUSED LITTLE INTEREST.

6. LOCAL WIRE SERVICE STORY TODAY, HOWEVER, IS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF REPORTED STATEMENT OF AZIZ AHMED ON TELEVISION THAT "DACCA WOULD HAVE TO RECONSIDER THE CASES OF PAKISTANI REPATRIATES FROM BANGLADESH." AZIZ AHMED REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE PROBLEM COULD NOT BE SOLVED BY "REMOVING A MINORITY WHOLESALE FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER." ACCORDING TO STORY, OBSERVERS HERE SUPPOSEDLY SEE THIS AS SOMERSAULT FROM SOLEMN PLEDGE TO REVIEW CASES AND A SURPRISING DEVELOPMENT FOLLOWING SO SOON AFTER DELHI AGREEMENT AND AZIZ'S ADVOCACY OF FRIENDLIEST AND WARMEST RELATIONS WITH BD.
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